Social Action Digest

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Dear friends,

The current issue of our monthly letter contains three thought-provoking excerpts. There are, first of all, Father Duff's philosophical considerations (with important practical applications) on property in the mid-century U.S.A. These observations were first offered in the discussions on property at a meeting of Jesuit social scientists (Le Groupe Européen des Sociologues S.J.) in Berlin last August.

Our next excerpt, from an interview of a CATHOLIC WORLD reporter with Dr. Ryan, Dean of the Graduate School at Xavier University in New Orleans, deals with a painful social problem - compulsory segregation. The American bishops have recently stressed that racial justice is fundamentally a moral and religious question. Thus, courageous and conscientious men should not let themselves be intimidated into silence. We must all face the issue and try to solve it with tact, patience, and true Christian charity.

The notes on "The Decline of the American Male" may be touching a sensitive nerve, but they will provide some interesting observations for your discussion clubs. You may want to add to your reading list the excellent interview with Father Edward Herr, "The Problems of Today's Teen-Agers" in AVE MARIA (Notre Dame, Ind.), April 4, 1959. Here is just one challenging quote: "Our present teen-agers were born during the war. Mothers had to bring up these kids. ... Mother had been the dominating influence too long. After the war when the father did come back, instead of fighting for his position he surrendered, went down to the bar and back to the gang atmosphere which he had grown used to in the army. Our fathers are a generation of frustrated coaches." Read the rest for yourselves, friends, it's interesting.

As you all know, views expressed in the excerpts of Social Action Digest are not necessarily opinions of the editor, or of Loyola University. I do hope you find all articles stimulating.

H. Schiffer, S.J.

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IAL ACTION DIGEST (published monthly, except July and August) presents applications of sound principles to the con-
e problems of modern life, especially in economics, by printing excerpts of articles and speeches by well qualified experts.
s, SOCIAL ACTION DIGEST hopes to stimulate intelligent discussions of vital topics and promote action to strengthen
private enterprise system and the ideals of freedom in a democratic society.

PROPERTY IN THE AMERICAN ENVIRONMENT

by Rev. Edward Duff, S.J.
Editor of SOCIAL ORDER

It is important to realize that there have been great changes in the concept of property, especially in recent history. In the middle ages, property was mostly income-producing, whereas a large part of property today is income-consuming. (Think of your house, car, etc.) In a predominantly agricultural society, the land is the primary source of wealth. In a modern industrialized society, on the other hand, the private property of most people depends almost entirely on current income. This development, together with property taxes and inheritance taxes, has resulted in a large-scale redistribution of wealth, and the same process is still continuing. -- The following excerpts are reprinted with kind permission of Father Duff, from SOCIAL ORDER (3908 Westminster Place, St. Louis 8, Mo.) Jan. 1959, p. 1 f.

The function of property is commonly listed as three-fold: 1. by endowing its possessor with economic independence, it protects human liberties; 2. by assuring undisputed ownership of goods of economic value, it provides its possessor, his family and heirs with security in times of adversity and old age; 3. by giving its possessor a sense of proprietorship, it promotes creativity and personal development.

These arguments, it might be noted, are not the convictions of Catholic social thinkers only. They were early voiced during the American Revolution and became part of our original political tradition as expressed by Thomas Jefferson.

Here we are confronted by a disturbing set of facts. The regime of widely distributed private property, in the form of ownership of land and of productive tools - demanded by our Ethics' textbooks - does not exist today in any real fashion anywhere in the Western world. Perhaps it never did.

And yet - perhaps to our surprise? - the logical consequences, predicted by the Ethics' textbooks have not notably occurred. American workers do not consider themselves enslaved by their employers. The brilliant success of Russian science appears to indicate, moreover, that there are incentives to creativity other than those connected with ownership. And as for economic security, the Western world has never before known an age when so few die of hunger or illness because resources of nourishment and medical care are beyond reach.

How account for this anomaly? Was our analysis of the case for private property incomplete and insecurely founded in the empirical order as was, for example, our ethical condemnation of women's right to vote? Are other influences supplying the fruits of property, other factors nullifying the evils traditionally associated with its decline? These questions are of more than passing concern.

Property Distribution in the U.S.

But, first, one ought to fix as clearly as possible the present pattern of the property situation in the United States, a society which unabashedly describes itself as capitalist.

> "There are 4.3 million separate business enterprises operating in the U.S.; to these can properly be added 3.3 million commercial farms and a very high proportion of the 550,000 professional persons - physicians, dentists, lawyers, architects, consultants of various kinds - who have

'business offices' ... The total, some 8 million ("firms"), can be conceived of as a vast collection of economic teams of individuals." (Committee for Economic Development, Economic Growth in the United States, New York, 1958, p. 20.)

One could note that there were 46 million dwelling units, in individual homes, apartment houses and housing projects in the U.S. in 1950; 3.5 people lived in the average unit, 4 out of these 5 units were single-family homes; and 55% of all this living space was owned by the occupant. The last decennial census figure for owner-occupied dwellings was 42,827,000. The 60 million automobiles in the U.S. also represent tangible private property of impressive dimensions. (How much of this property is free of debt is another question, of course. Over ½ of American spending units have less than $500 in liquid cash.)

One could also point, as is commonly done, to the wide ownership of the shares of American corporations. Of the 25 largest U.S. industrial corporations, 19 have more shareholders than employees.

M. Nadler notes that shareholders in the country's corporations rose from 6.5 million people in 1952 to 8.6 at the end of 1955, with more than half of these in households with incomes between $3,000 and $5,000 a year. He boasts of the striking growth of mutual investment funds, amounting to over $9 billion at the end of 1955, as an indication of how the small investors, generally wage-earners, are in effect hiring professional talent to select their stock for them. (People's Capitalism, The Hanover Bank, New York, 1956.)

Such argumentation is overzealous and the picture it paints is a half-truth. First of all, less than 1 in 10 Americans own any stock. More important, the functioning of the large corporation makes stock ownership a form of property hardly satisfying our traditional concept.

The characteristic and dominant instrument of American production is the large corporation: the top 500 of them run two-thirds of our economy. It is a legal mechanism where ownership is not identified with effective control. Moreover, the mass of stockholders do not want to be "owners" in any real sense. The average investor has bought shares in the corporation in order to make money, wether through dividends or through the growth in value of the stock. If he disapproves of the performance of the managers or of the policy of the directors, he scarcely ever seeks to assert his property rights; he simply liquidates his equity. Nor has he any other practical option. For individual owners the median or middle shareholding is well below 100 shares. A packet of 100 shares makes the stockholder so ineffectual as a policy maker that only an exhibitionist would feel himself entitled, on the strength of his equity in the company, to eat the free lunch provided at the annual shareholders' meeting and then to proclaim his disagreement.

Anonymous ownership and autonomous control are the marks of the modern giant corporation.

How dominant is this form of property, the giant corporation, in the American economy? Prof. M. Adelman calculated that 135 corporations own 45% of the industrial (i.e. non-agricultural, non-financial) assets of the United States or nearly ¼ of the manufacturing volume of the entire world. Prof. J. Galbraith points out:

"In the production of motor vehicles, agricultural machinery, rubber tires, cigarettes, aluminum, liquor, meat products, copper, tin containers and office machinery the largest 3 firms in 1947 did 2/3 or more of all business. In steel, glass, industrial chemical and dairy products the largest 6 accounted for two-thirds." (American Capitalism, Boston, 1952, p.42.)

(To be continued in May)

COMPULSORY SEGREGATION VS. RACIAL JUSTICE

Is the situation getting worse instead of better?
What has happened to the "Fifth Column of Good Will"?
Has the Church's social action program bogged down?

His Eminence Francis Cardinal Spellman said in his statement before the Commission on Civil Rights on Feb.3, 1959: "Discrimination - injustice or prejudice perpetrated against any race, color or creed is a fatal disease which brings misery and heartaches not only to those who are the victims of this ugly, irreligious and unconstitutional practice, but also brings dishonor and disaster upon the entire country. Discrimination, racial or religious, can become the hangman of any free nation. ... Bigotry's source and bigotry's force is hatred, and the bigot is a promoter and protector of the cult of hatred! ... Love, above all, means justice for all our fellowmen." -- The following excerpts from an interview with Dr. Stephen P. Ryan, Dean of the Graduate School at Xavier University, New Orleans, show how much remains to be done. Reprinted from THE CATHOLIC WORLD (180 Varick St., New York 14, N.Y.), Jan. 1959, p. 274 f.

Q. How much integration has there been in Louisiana?

A. Preciously little. Some at the state universities and colleges, on both graduate and undergraduate levels. Loyola (white) has a few, a very few negro students; Xavier (negro) has a few, a very few white students. The diocesan seminary is integrated. No other private colleges are. There is, to the best of my knowledge, no integration anywhere in the state below the college level. There is "integrated" seating on the buses in New Orleans. On the whole, however, the situation is far worse than it was 5 years ago. There have been many discriminatory acts passed by the Louisiana legislature, particularly in the session of 1956.

Q. Do you see any signs that the attitude toward the negro is changing in "Catholic" Louisiana?

A. Generally, 5, 10, 15 years ago, southern Louisiana (which is "Catholic" Louisiana) was disposed to be far more tolerant on racial matters than the Protestant northern section of the state. Today I regret to report that the Catholic resident of Louisiana is as ardent a racist as his non-Catholic neighbor.

Q. What do you think of Martin Luther King, Jr., and his policy of non-violent resistance to the segregated system?

A. I admire him, and his policies have been amply vindicated by the results obtained in Montgomery, Alabama. Whether the same tactics would work equally well elsewhere is problematical. Unhappily, negro leadership of this stature is lacking in most Southern communities.

Q. Do you think there is a connection between the South's resistance to labor organization and the South's resistance to desegregation?

A. Unquestionably. Both stem from a regional aversion to change, a regional predisposition toward acceptance of the status quo, and a regional conservatism which sees subversive forces operating behind the scenes in both labor and integration movement.

Q. Do you think the Church should take a more definite, public stand on the immorality of segregation?

A. Yes, and the recent Bishops' Statement will help. The Catholic population of the South, with some notable exceptions, is simply not aware of

the Church's teachings on race and racism. The few priests who dare to speak on social matters from the pulpit are only too frequently "transferred". Moreover - I say this with the utmost sadness - there are actually priests working in the South who are only too obviously on the side of the segregationists. Greater courage and forthrightness on the part of the Church's spokesmen is an absolute must.

Q. In general, what recommendations would you make for the handling of the race problem in the South?

A. So many things seem called for! Certainly a strong Civil Rights law with teeth in it is needed. There should be some central clearinghouse where Southerners with integrationist sympathies could get together and form a solid front, an organization strong enough and enrolling sufficient numbers to insure the coming out from hiding of the "Fifth Column of Good Will". The enemy has taken the initiative from us. Consolidation of our position seems to be the need now.

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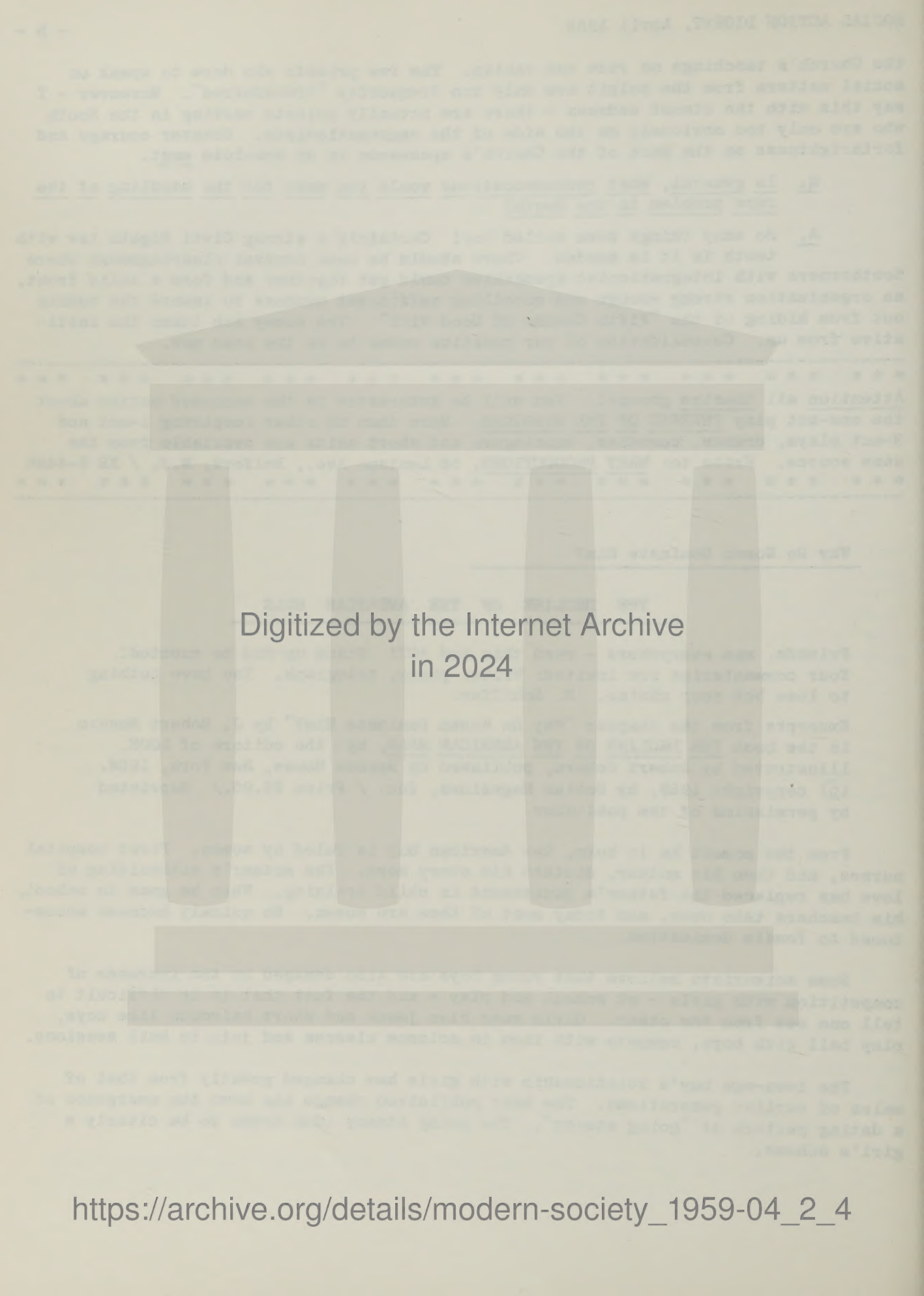
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Social scientists recognize that men have their own ambitions and material desires, but it is women who sustain the principle of keeping up with their neighbors. A man's wife may originate the campaign for a second car, or she may just be echoing the ever-persistent demands of other women.

Wives may say they want their husbands to ease up, but they still hold out the carrot to lead their husbands up the hill to success - and toward two cars in the garage. Writers James Thurber and E.B. White, in IS SEX NECESSARY?, have described the American husband's status with humor: "A wife should strive at all times to give her husband at least the illusion that he is free to come and go.... If a husband uses a guest towel, he should be quietly reprimanded, but under no circumstances be sent to his room." It is not insignificant that is has been years since most American brides have promised to "obey".

Female dominance has become equally damaging when husband turns father. The experts have begun to worry most of all about the problem of the "housework-participating father". For years authorities have urged women to convert the father into a male version of the mother. Now they feel they have pushed him too far, that they have demasculinized him. Sociologist Helen Hacker labels him as only a "mother-substitute or nursery assistant".

By numbers alone, the American woman has the means to dominate her men. (There are 1,513,000 more women than men in the United States. Eight years ago, there were only 601,000 more.) But perhaps her most crucial national influence to date is economic - as a consumer. FORTUNE credits her with control over about 60% of all consumer purchases. In addition, the Gallup Poll reports that the wife participates in managing the funds in 71% of American households - and in nearly half of those, the husband has completely surrendered the power of the purse.

What about the future? Anthropologist Ashley Montagu urges the American woman to plunge boldly onward in "the sudden awareness of her strength in relation to man's weakness." Dr. John A. Schindler says: "The American woman is a new thing. She's like a vice-president who has suddenly become president." He predicts it will take men three generations to become thoroughly used to her. Other commentators call on men to surrender now, to accept women's dominance and adapt to it.

Almost no one is rallying men to call a halt and make a stand.

COMING ATTRACTIONS: The May issue of SOCIAL ACTION DIGEST will bring you the heart-warming story of Jesuit Father Rahm's work with street gang youngsters in El Paso, Texas: A Miracle in El Paso, and a case history of the New York Association of Catholic Trade Unionists' courageous fight against labor union racketeers. The article "Property in the American Environment" will be continued. You will soon read an article on Family Allowances.

"The magazine SOCIAL ORDER (published by the National Jesuit Social Science Center, St. Louis) is indispensable to the social apostolate of the Church in the United States. ... It is required reading."
Msgr. George G. Higgins, N.C.W.C.